

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

January 6, 2009 – 6:00 PM
Conference Room B
Rockford City Hall

Present: Laura Bachelder, David Hagney, Maureen Flanagan, Mark McInnis

Staff: Ginny Gregory, Arianne Clarke, Reid Montgomery, Wendy Williams (Public Works)

Election of officers (Chair and Vice Chair)

Laura Bachelder stated there is a need to elect officers for Chair and Vice Chair. She reminded everyone that she leaves the Commission at the end of April. Maureen suggested they keep to the status quo until then.

David Hagney made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the status quo, retaining Laura Bachelder as Chair and Maureen Flanagan as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Mark McInnis and **CARRIED** by a vote of 4-0.

Approval of Minutes

David Hagney made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the minutes for the meeting of December 2, 2008 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Mark McInnis and **CARRIED** by a vote of 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Certificate of Appropriateness – Lighting on Kishwaukee Street

Wendy Williams, Project Manager from the Public Works Department, explained that Kishwaukee Street is currently torn up due to construction projects in which IDOT is doing the majority of the work. The City of Rockford is planning to put in decorative lighting just south of Harrison all the way to 1st Avenue which comes along the Haight Village area.

Wendy referred to the hand-out of various drawings of the lighting project. She explained that they propose to use the same lighting on Kishwaukee that was installed on Harrison Avenue recently, the plan being to try to use one style of light fixture for all of Rockford's arterial streets. Both roads will look identical in terms of lighting except the Kishwaukee lights will have banner arms instead of pedestrian level lights below the street lights. Wendy referred to the drawing of Kishwaukee that extends from 4th Ave to 1st Ave and stated there are currently three Wellsbach lights in the Haight Village area. Two are located on both sides of Oak and while the third one is close to Walnut. She explained the plan is to come all the way to Walnut with the taller new decorative fixtures

Wendy stated she has talked to the Traffic people and they are excited to be able to use the old lighting for replacement parts for the Wellsbach lights inside Haight Village. These lights are no longer available on the market so these will be put to good use.

Laura asked the difference between the heights of the lights currently and the new ones. Wendy answered the new lights are about 40 feet high and the old ones about 15-20 feet tall.

The new ones being proposed here are the same kind as the lights on Harrison. Wendy stated this style was chosen for uniform lighting on arterials throughout City and will be decorative.

Mark wondered if the City proposes to place the new lights in the same spot as the Wellsbach currently are. Wendy replied no, but pointed out the left side of the last page of her proposal showing the new locations.

Mark asked if there would be three on Kishwaukee and one on Oak. Wendy showed the group the area in which they are going. David Hagney asked if there will only be three fixtures in the area. Wendy replied yes, they give out a lot of light. Ginny adds that it may be the only place with room to put them. Wendy mentioned there will be four large lights going in and three lights coming out in that area.

Mark McInnis states that Haight Village is a unique place and raised a concern that people in that area may not approve of the plans and wondered if options have been reviewed for putting lights in the opposite side of area. Ginny responded that there is no other place and showed him the aerial. Mark wondered if there is some distance between the building and the street, with a sidewalk. Ginny answered there were in some cases, but not in every case. Wendy stated the whole idea is to have one type of lighting for each area; mixing may cause the area to look unbalanced. Ginny added that it is an arterial street, where better lighting is needed.

Mark also mentioned his fear that when the City is done with Kishwaukee they may want to take out the lights on Walnut. Wendy responded the City only plans on updating Kishwaukee now.

Mark asked if these locations are based on foot candle calculations. Wendy answered yes.

David asked if it was just one fixture south of Oak Street that would be replaced. Wendy replied there are only Wells Bach on Kishwaukee; the replacements go all the way down to Harrison. There will be added ones between Oak Street and the railroad with a new light about every 150 feet.

Mark asked, from the Haight Village stand point, is the City taking away from the main signage, and wouldn't you need some lighting in Grove. There is a light on the corner of Grove and Kishwaukee. Wendy replied the City may not have looked far enough back but the only concern are the lights in direct conflict with the arterial.

Mark proposed the City put the new lights on the east side and keep the Wellsbachs on the west side since it's part of the logo for Haight Village. He believed there would not be any interference of light this way or maybe some people may have sympathetic attachment to the older lights. Ginny responded by saying that she has heard residents complain about the little light that the existing fixtures throw out, adding that sooner or later they will need to be replaced since this particular type is not made any more. Mark remarked that he was sure the City could find a light that is closer in style.

Maureen asked if there will be just one light on each new pole. Wendy replied there would, together with a banner arm.

Mark McInnis made a **MOTION** to **TABLE** this topic until further investigation by the City. The motion was second by David Hagney and **CARRIED** by a vote of **4-0**.

Wendy said she will forward the extended plans showing the planned work farther south.

Public hearing for landmark application

Ginny stated there are two historical buildings, Peacock Brewery and the Brewmeisters house on North Madison at Prairie Street. Gary Anderson is submitting an application to have them designated a historic district. She said she told Gary she would ask the Commission to set the date for the public hearing at this meeting, but will not request a legal notice to be printed in the paper until she gets all the paperwork completed. Ginny suggested they set the date at the first part of the next meeting on February 3, 2009. Commission members agreed with this.

Staff report

Ginny explained she sent letters to the Rockford Area Association of Realtors but has not sent letters to the title companies because the letter states that Sally would to call each of them to follow up on the letter. Since there are over a dozen title companies, Ginny believed the letter may need to be altered. Maureen suggested calling numbers before mailing letters as owners may be gone.

Ginny received an e-mail from Joanna Dowling who has a masters degree in Historic Preservation from the Art Institute. Ms. Dowling indicated she would like to be involved with the historic preservation community in Rockford. Ginny has a meeting scheduled for Friday to talk with her; she may want to volunteer.

Ginny stated the National Trust has grant money available and she has contacted them hoping they will match the money we applied for as a CLG grant from IHPA to pay for the environmental assessment of the Armory. Maureen asked if the Commission would be able to purchase a Phase 2 with that money. Ginny replied the application is for both a Phase 1 and a Phase 2.

David asked if the owner at 904 North Prospect had stopped working. Ginny responded she has not had the chance to check in to it but, will look into it next week.

Ginny let everyone know she checked the homes on Kishwaukee Street and Property Standards will be sending a letter for Code Hearing. She indicated she will try to get out next week for more pictures, and will send a letter to Mr. Feirn.

Ginny stated the duplex at 401-408 South 2nd Street has been through and taken out of the code hearing process. However, when she drove by earlier, the front picture window had been broken out. She stated the Code Hearing process has been started again. Maureen wondered if those were abandoned houses. Ginny stated it is hard to tell but one has a rent sign out front. Mark remarked there are several houses with broken windows.

Mark professed some frustration with properties who continually abuse the system. He felt there was a lack of harsher punishment for those property owners. He thought it was getting tiresome to hear people say " I didn't know." A couple properties can drag down an entire neighborhood.

Ginny responded by saying we have teeth but our ordinance indicates the only way to force someone to do something is to take them to court, which gives you no guarantee that punishment is going to work. Mark said the current process is costly and time consuming and there is nothing preventing them from destroying a home. Ginny answered that would be true in any case and if someone did demolish a building without permission the City may not let them have a building permit again for up to three years. Ginny stated the Legal Department has indicated that our ordinance can be amended so this Commission can send owners to code hearing instead of to court. Maureen asked if that would include a fine. Ginny answered, yes it possibly can, but the judge assigns the verdict. Maureen wondered if an amended ordinance only goes before Council or if it would need to be made public. Ginny replied it only goes before Council, however the Commission cannot apply fines, the Court does and the City of Rockford prefers to get people in compliance, not to get money. Maureen questioned the need to amend the ordinance. Mark asked what the correct procedure to amend the ordinance was. Ginny stated she would need to meet with the attorneys to discover the proper steps. Laura replied it may help the Commission with some of the recent problems.

Reid stated rental law is in the works to inspect rentals every year, but if there is a life safety issue it can be referred to Neighborhood Standards.

Meeting adjourned at 6:43p.m.